Fairies' Hope for Christian Salvation

Migratory Legends of Type 5050
translated and/or edited by

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A Redeemer for the Elves?

Sweden

If the wanderer in a summer's evening lays himself to rest by an elf-mount, he soon hears the tones of a harp with sweet singing. If he then promises them redemption, he will hear the most joyful notes resound from numerous stringed instruments; but if he says, "Ye have no redeemer," then with cries and loud lament they will dash their harps in pieces; after which all is silent in the mount.

- Source: Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology, Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and Superstititions of Scandinavia, North Germany, and the Netherlands*, vol. 2 (London: Edward Lumley, 1851), p. 64.
- Thorpe does not give this account a title.
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The *Näck* and the *Strömkarl*

Sweden

The *näck* appears sometimes in the form of a grown man, and is particularly dangerous to haughty and pert damsels; sometimes in that of a comely youth, with his lower extremities like those of a horse; sometimes like an old man with a long beard; and occasionally as a handsome youth, with yellow locks flowing over his shoulders and a red cap, sitting in a summer evening on the surface of the water with a golden harp in his hand.

If any one wishes to learn music of him, the most welcome remuneration that can be offered to him is a black lamb, especially if the hope of his salvation -- which the *näck* has greatly at heart -- be at the same time expressed to him.

Hence when two boys once said to a *näck*: "What good do you gain by sitting here and playing? You will never enjoy eternal happiness," he began to weep bitterly.

. . .

A *näck* who takes up his abode under a bridge or in a stream, is commonly called a *strömkarl*. He always plays on the viol; and when any musician plays with extraordinary boldness and skill, he is said to play with the *strömkarl's* touch.

Near Hornborga Bridge, in Västergötland, a *strömkarl* was once heard singing, to a pleasant melody, these words thrice repeated: "I know, and I know, and I know that my redeemer liveth."

As seen by sailors, the *näck* is described as an old man, sitting on a rock, wringing the water out of his large, green beard. Their appearance is said to forebode storm and tempest. Under this form they may be more correctly called *mermen*. He is sometimes seen on the shore under the form of a handsome horse, but with his hoofs reversed.

A priest riding one evening over a bridge, heard the most delightful tones of a stringed instrument, and, on looking round, saw a young man, naked to the waist, sitting on the surface of the water, with a red cap and yellow locks, as already described.

He saw that it was the *näck*, and in his zeal addressed him thus: "Why dost thou so joyously strike thy harp? Sooner shall this dried cane that I hold in my hand grow green and flower, than thou shalt obtain salvation."

Thereupon the unhappy musician cast down his harp, and sat bitterly weeping on the water. The priest then turned his horse, and continued his course. But lo! Before he had ridden far, he observed that green shoots and

leaves, mingled with most beautiful flowers, had sprung from his old staff. This seemed to him a sign from heaven, directing him to preach the consoling doctrine of redemption after another fashion.

He therefore hastened back to the mournful *näck*, showed him the green, flowery staff, and said: "Behold! Now my old staff is grown green and flowery like a young branch in a rose garden. So likewise may hope bloom in the hearts of all created beings, for their Redeemer liveth!"

Comforted by these words, the *näck* again took his harp, the joyous tones of which resounded along the shore the whole livelong night.

- Source (books.google.com): Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology, Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and superstitions of Scandinavia, North Germany, and the Netherlands*, vol. 2 (London: Edward Lumley, 1851), pp. 78-80.
- Source (Internet Archive): Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology, Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and superstitions of Scandinavia, North Germany, and the Netherlands*, vol. 2 (London: Edward Lumley, 1851), pp. 78-80.
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Salvation for the *Neck*

Sweden

The following story is told in all parts of Sweden:

> Two boys were one time playing near a river that ran by their father's house. The *neck* rose and sat on the surface of the water, and played on his harp; but one of the children said to him, "What is the use, *neck*, of your sitting there and playing? You will never be saved."
>
> The *neck* then began to weep bitterly, flung away his harp, and sank down to the bottom.
>
> The children went home, and told the whole story to their father, who was the parish priest. He said they were wrong to say so to the *neck*, and desired them to go immediately back to the river, and console him with the promise of salvation. They did so; and when they came down to the river the *neck* was sitting on the water, weeping and lamenting.
>
> They then said to him, "*Neck*, do not grieve so; our father says that your redeemer liveth also."
>
> The *neck* then took his harp and played most sweetly, until long after the sun was gone down.

In another form of this legend, a priest says to the *neck*, "Sooner will this cane which I hold in my hand grow green flowers than thou shalt attain salvation."

The *neck* in grief flung away his harp and wept, and the priest rode on. But soon his cane began to put forth leaves and blossoms, and he then went back to communicate the glad tidings to the *neck*, who now joyously played on all the entire night.

- Source: Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology, Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries*, new edition (London: H. G. Bohn, 1850), p. 149-50.

- Keightley does not give titles to these two accounts.
- The *neck* (Swedish *näck*) is a nature-being associated with water. Often taking the form of a horse, he is represented (with various names) in folklore throughout northern Europe.
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The Water Nymph

Sweden

About a mile northwest from Järna Church was located, at one time, a water mill, Snöåqvarn, belonging to the parishoners of Näs.

One Sunday morning, before the church of Järna had a priest of its own, the chaplain of Näs set out for that place, and had just arrived at the mill, when he saw a water man sitting in the rapids below it, playing on a fiddle a psalm from a psalm book.

"What good do you think your playing will do you?" said the priest. "You need expect no mercy!"

Sadly the figure ceased playing, and broke his fiddle in pieces, whereupon the priest regretted his severe condemnation, and again spoke, "God knows, maybe, after all."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the man in joy, "Then I'll pick up my pieces and play better and more charmingly than before."

- Source (books.google.com): Herman Hofberg, *Swedish Fairy Tales*, translated by W. H. Myers (Chicago: Belford-Clarke Company, 1890), pp. 194-95.
- Source (Internet Archive): Herman Hofberg, *Swedish Fairy Tales* translated by W. H. Myers (Chicago: Belford-Clarke Company, 1890), pp. 194-95.
- Footnote by Hofberg: "The water nymphs are noted musicians; their music usually being in a plaintive strain and expressing a longing to be released on the day of judgment. Sometimes, but not so often, they appear in the folklore as the capricious rulers of the streams which they inhabit."
- The original Swedish text (books.google.com):
    - Herman Hofberg, "Forskarlen," *Svenska Folksägner* (Stockholm: Fr. Skoglunds Förlag, 1882), pp. 169-70.
- The places named in this legend are in the Swedish province of Dalarna.
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The Trolls Desire to Be Saved

Denmark

One night as a priest was going from Hiorlunde to Rolskilde [*sic*], he passed by a mount in which there were music, dancing and other merriment.

At this moment some Dwarfs sprang forth from the mount, stopped the priest's vehicle, and said, "Whither art thou going?"

"To Landemode," answered the priest.

They then asked him whether he thought they could be saved; to which he replied that he could not then inform them. They then appointed him to meet them with an answer in a year.

In the meantime it went ill with the coachman, who the next time he passed by the mount was overturned and killed on the spot.

When the priest came again at the end of a year, they again asked him the same question, to which he answered, "No! You are all damned!"

Scarcely had he uttered the words before the whole mount was in a blaze.

- Source: Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology, Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and Superstitions of Scandinavia, North Germany, and the Netherlands*, vol. 2 (London: Edward Lumley, 1851), pp. 151-52.
- Thorpe's source: J. M. Thiele, "Troldene ønske at blive salige," *Danmarks Folkesagn*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Universitetsboghandler C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1843), pp. 243-44.
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The Clergyman and the Dwarfs

Denmark

A clergyman, it is said, was journeying one night to Roeskilde [*sic*] in Zealand. His way led by a hill in which there was music and dancing and great merriment going forward. Some dwarfs jumped suddenly out of it, stopped the carriage, and asked him whither he was going. He replied to the synod of the church. They asked him if he thought they could be saved. To that, he replied, he could not give an immediate answer. They then begged that he would give them a reply by next year.

When he next passed, and they made the same demand, he replied, "No, you are all damned."

Scarcely had he spoken the word, when the whole hill appeared in flames.

- Source: Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology, Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1850), pp. 149-50.
- Keightley does not give this account a title.
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Gillikop

Denmark

Once some Jutlanders got hold of a mound-dwarf. Not knowing any better, they wanted to make him a Christian, so they put him on a cart to take him to church, where he was to be baptized.

He sat there looking out, when the peasants heard a voice on the road shouting: "Where to, Gillikop?"

The dwarf answered from the cart: "Far away, Slangerop! To a little water that will make a better man of me!"

- Source (books.google.com): J. M. Thiele, "Gillikop," *Danmarks Folkesagn*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1843), p. 243.
- Source (Internet Archive): J. M. Thiele, "Gillikop," *Danmarks Folkesagn*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1843), p. 243.
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When We Cease to Exist....

An excerpt from "The Little Mermaid" by Hans Christian Andersen

"If human beings are not drowned," asked the little mermaid, "can they live forever? Do they never die, as we do here in the sea?"

"Yes," replied the old lady [the little mermaid's grandmother], "they must also die, and their term of life is even shorter than ours. We sometimes live for three hundred years, but when we cease to exist here, we become only foam on the surface of the water and have not even a grave among those we love. We have not immortal souls, we shall never live again; like the green seaweed when once it has been cut off, we can never flourish more. Human beings, on the contrary, have souls which live forever, even after the body has been turned to dust. They rise up through the clear, pure air, beyond the glittering stars. As we rise out of the water and behold all the land of the earth, so do they rise to unknown and glorious regions which we shall never see."

"Why have not we immortal souls?" asked the little mermaid, mournfully. "I would gladly give all the hundreds of years that I have to live, to be a human being only for one day and to have the hope of knowing the happiness of that glorious world above the stars."

"You must not think that," said the old woman. "We believe that we are much happier and much better off than human beings."

"So I shall die," said the little mermaid, "and as the foam of the sea I shall be driven about, never again to hear the music of the waves or to see the pretty flowers or the red sun? Is there anything I can do to win an immortal soul?"

"No," said the old woman; "unless a man should love you so much that you were more to him than his father or his mother, and if all his thoughts and all his love were fixed upon you, and the priest placed his right hand in yours, and he promised to be true to you here and hereafter -- then his soul would glide into your body, and you would obtain a share in the future happiness of mankind. He would give to you a soul and retain his own as well; but this can never happen."

- Source: Hans Christian Andersen, *Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales*, second series, edited by J. H. Stickney (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1915), pp. 143-45. For the entire story see pp. 124-69.
- Link to "The Little Mermaid" in Danish: Den lille Havfrue (1837).
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The Convent Nixie in Guben

Germany

On the outpost Einbecke near Guben there is a spring that 300 years ago was called Ostera Spring and was prized for its healing powers.

A nixie lives in this spring. On holy nights, especially at Easter and Saint John's Day, she can still be seen at the edge of the spring.

This nixie once loved a handsome young burgher's son from Guben, named Heinrich. She had many secret meetings with him, but in the end the young man's piety and fear of God were stronger than his love for her. He dedicated himself to the Virgin Mary, and for the sake of his soul's salvation, he resisted all the temptations of the lovely pagan woman.

Tormented by indescribable grief at the loss of her beloved, the nixie decided to learn of the powers that had estranged the youth from her. To this end she entered the service of the Holy Virgin, who, as she jealously thought, had robbed her of her handsome Heinrich.

Thus she went to the convent of the virgins and, as a lay sister, performed the meanest and hardest maid services, silently and unrecognized. However, Christ entered her soul and filled her with the blessings of the gospel. Thus holy love for her rival Mary erased the pagan resentment in her heart.

Her humility and piety were soon recognized, and with time, under the name of Paula, she became a nun, a subprioress, a prioress, and finally the abbess of the convent. Her wonderful knowledge of natural healing powers and her undaunted active love of healing the sick soon brought her a reputation for holiness.

No one suspected her origin, because the nixies completely resemble humans, although they always have a damp hem on their robes as a sign of their native element.

No matter how carefully the abbess tried to hide the damp hem of her veil, it did not escape the spying eyes of a young, clever, and curious nun, and her secret soon became known to the whole convent.

From that hour on she was alienated from the hearts of the nuns. Cold greetings, lurking looks, and secret whispers wounded the heart of the loving abbess.

The confessor of the convent soon learned her secret. In his zeal for the salvation of the church, he questioned the abbess in the confessional. Hearing his first words, the unfortunate woman stood up, wringing her hands and lamenting. She confessed that she was the nixie of Ostera Spring and added, lamenting, that she now had to go back to her damp dwelling.

Just one more year, and her seven years of trial would have been over, and her soul would have been saved. Close to her goal, she was now farther than ever from it, because of the hasty zeal of the nuns.

She took leave of the convent, all its sacred objects, and all its inhabitants. The nuns wept a great deal, for they all loved greatly, even though she was a nixie. And then she silently went back to her former cold dwelling.

Since then she has often been seen walking through the cloisters of the convent at night in her nun's habit. She can be seen particularly well there on the night before August 15, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. She has never done harm to anyone.

> Note: The name of the spring is a clear reminder of the Germanic goddess Ostera. The longing of the nixies for salvation and bliss and their pain when their hope for it is frustrated is a particularly melancholy and touching trait, which is particularly characteristic of Nordic legends.

- Source (books.google.com): Karl Haupt, "Die Klosternixe zu Guben," *Sagenbuch der Lausitz*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1863), no. 328, pp. 232-33.
- Source (Internet Archive): Karl Haupt, "Die Klosternixe zu Guben," *Sagenbuch der Lausitz*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1863), no. 328, pp. 232-33.
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The Sea Bishop

Germany / Poland

In 1433 a merman who resembled a bishop in every way was caught in the Baltic Sea. He wore a bishop's mitre on his head, held a bishop's staff in his hand, and wore a robe like a chasuble. The king of Poland kept him for some days, but when he found that the merman would not live long because of great distress, he had him put back into the sea.

The merman showed the bishops a great deal of honor. He let them touch him, but he did not speak.

When the king of Poland wanted to lock him up in a tower and keep him there, he protested and begged the bishops with expressions and signs to let him go back to his element. He was then led by two bishops to the sea. When he saw the water, he showed great joy and quickly jumped in. He then made the sign of the cross, bowed his head as if he wanted to thank them, and dived under. He was never seen again.

- Source (books.google.com): Johannes Wilhelm Wolf, "Seebischof," *Deutsche Märchen und Sagen* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1845), no. 246, p. 355.
- Source (Internet Archive): Johannes Wilhelm Wolf, "Seebischof," *Deutsche Märchen und Sagen* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1845), no. 246, p. 355.
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The Pious Clergyman and the Fairy

Scotland

Not long since, as a pious clergyman was returning home, after administering spiritual consolation to a dying member of his flock, it was late of the night, and he had to pass through a good deal of uncanny ground. He was, however, a good and a conscientious minister of the gospel, and feared not all the spirits in the country.

On his reaching the end of a lake which stretched alongst the roadside for some distance, he was a good deal surprised to have his attention arrested by the most melodious strains of music. Overcome by pleasure and curiosity, the minister coolly sat down to listen to the harmonious sounds, and try what new discoveries he could make with regard to their nature and source. He had not sitten many minutes when he could distinguish the approach of the music, and also observe a light in the direction from whence it proceeded gliding across the lake towards him.

Instead of taking to his heels, as any faithless wight would have done, the pastor fearlessly determined to await the issue of the phenomenon. As the light and music drew near, the clergyman could at length distinguish an object resembling a human being walking on the surface of the water, attended by a group of diminutive musicians, some of them bearing lights, and others of them instruments of music, on which they continued to perform those melodious strains which first attracted his attention.

The leader of the band dismissed his attendants, landed on the beach, and afforded the minister the amplest opportunities of examining his appearance. He was a little primitive looking grey-headed man, clad in the most grotesque habit he ever witnessed, and such as led the venerable minister all at once to suspect his real character. He walked up to the minister, whom he saluted with great grace, offering an apology for his intrusion.

The pastor returned his compliments, and without farther explanation, invited the mysterious stranger to sit down by his side.

The invitation was complied with, upon which the minister proposed the following question: "Who art thou, stranger, and from whence?"

To this question the fairy, with downcast eye, replied, that he was one of those sometimes called *Doane Shee*, or men of peace, or good men, though the reverse of this title was a more fit appellation for them. Originally angelic in his nature and attributes, and once a sharer of the indescribable joys of the regions of light, he was seduced by Satan to join him in his mad conspiracies; and, as a punishment for his transgression, he was cast down from those regions of bliss, and was now doomed, along with millions of fellow sufferers, to wander through seas and mountains, until the coming of the great day; what their fate would be then they could not divine, but they apprehended the worst.

"And," continued he, turning to the minister, with great anxiety, "the object of my present intrusion on you is to learn your opinion, as an eminent divine, as to our final condition on that dreadful day."

Here the venerable pastor entered upon a long conversation with the fairy, (the particulars of which we shall be excused for omitting,) touching the principles of faith and repentance. Receiving rather unsatisfactory answers to his questions, the minister desired the "*Sheech*" to repeat after him the Paternoster, in attempting to do which, it was not a little remarkable, that he could not repeat the word "*art*," but "*wert,*" in heaven.

Inferring from every circumstance, that their fate was extremely precarious, the minister resolved not to puff the fairies up with presumptuous and perhaps groundless expectations. Accordingly, addressing himself to the unhappy fairy, who was all anxiety to know the nature of his sentiments, the reverend gentleman told him, that he could not take it upon him to give them any hopes of pardon, as their crime was of so deep a hue as scarcely to admit of it.

On this the unhappy fairy uttered a shriek of despair, plunged headlong into the loch, and the minister resumed his course to his home.

- Source (books.google.com): William Grant Stewart, *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company; London: Hurst, Robinson, and Company, 1823), pp. 58-62.

- Source (Internet Archive): William Grant Stewart, *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company; London: Hurst, Robinson, and Company, 1823), pp. 58-62.
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A Ross-Shire Narrative

Scotland

In a Ross-Shire narrative, a beautiful green lady is represented as appearing to an old man reading the Bible, and seeking to know, if for such as her, Holy Scripture held out any hope of salvation. The old man spoke kindly to her; but said, that in these pages there was no mention of salvation for any but the sinful sons of Adam. She flung her arms over her head, screamed, and plunged into the sea.

- Source: John Francis Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1860), p. 64.
- Campbell does not give this account a title.
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The Priest's Supper

Ireland

It is said by those who ought to understand such things, that the good people, or the fairies, are some of the angels who were turned out of heaven, and who landed on their feet in this world, while the rest of their companions, who had more sin to sink them, went down further to a worse place. Be this as it may, there was a merry troop of the fairies, dancing and playing all manner of wild pranks on a bright moonlight evening towards the end of September. The scene of their merriment was not far distant from Inchegeela, in the west of the county Cork -- a poor village, although it had a barrack for soldiers; but great mountains and barren rocks, like those round about it, are enough to strike poverty into any place. However, as the fairies can have every thing they want for wishing, poverty does not trouble them much, and all their care is to seek out unfrequented nooks and places where it is not likely anyone will come to spoil their sport.

On a nice green sod by the river's side were the little fellows dancing in a ring as gaily as may be, with their red caps wagging about at every bound in the moonshine; and so light were these bounds, that the lobes of dew, although they trembled under their feet, were not disturbed by their capering. Thus did they carry on their gambols, spinning round and round, and twirling and bobbing, and diving and going through all manner of figures, until one of them chirped out,

> Cease, cease, with your drumming,
> Here's an end to our mumming,
> By my smell
> I can tell
> A priest this way is coming!

And away every one of the fairies scampered off as hard as they could, concealing themselves under the green leaves of the lusmore, where, if their little red caps should happen to peep out, they would only look like its crimson bells; and more hid themselves in the hollow of stones, or at the shady side of brambles, and others under the bank of the river, and in holes and crannies of one kind or another.

The fairy speaker was not mistaken; for along the road, which was within view of the river, came Father Horrigan on his pony, thinking to himself that as it was so late he would make an end of his journey at the first cabin he came to. According to this determination, he stopped at the dwelling of Dermod Leary, lifted the latch, and entered with "My blessing on all here."

I need not say that Father Horrigan was a welcome guest wherever he went, for no man was more pious or better beloved in the country. Now it was a great trouble to Dermod that he had nothing to offer his reverence for supper as a relish to the potatoes which "the old woman," for so Dermod called his wife, though she was not much past twenty, had down boiling in the pot over the fire; he thought of the net which he had set in the river, but as it had been there only a short time, the chances were against his finding a fish in it.

"No matter," thought Dermod, "there can be no harm in stepping down to try, and may be as I want the fish for the priest's supper that one will be there before me."

Down to the river side went Dermod, and he found in the net as fine a salmon as ever jumped in the bright waters of "the spreading Lee." But as he was going to take it out, the net was pulled from him, he could not tell how or by whom, and away got the salmon, and went swimming along with the current as gaily as if nothing had happened.

Dermod looked sorrowfully at the wake which the fish had left upon the water, shining like a line of silver in the moonlight, and then, with an angry motion of his right hand, and a stamp of his foot, gave vent to his feelings by muttering, "May bitter bad luck attend you night and day for a blackguard schemer of a salmon, wherever you go! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, if there's any shame in you, to give me the slip after this fashion! And I'm clear in my own mind you'll come to no good, for some kind of evil thing or other helped you -- did I not feel it pull the net against me as strong as the devil himself?"

"That's not true for you," said one of the little fairies, who had scampered off at the approach of the priest, coming up to Dermod Leary, with a whole throng of companions at his heels; "there was only a dozen and a half of us pulling against you."

Dermod gazed on the tiny speaker with wonder, who continued, "Make yourself noways uneasy about the priest's supper; for if you will go back and ask him one question from us, there will be as fine a supper as ever was put on a table spread out before him in less than no time."

"I'll have nothing at all to do with you," replied Dermod, in a tone of determination; and after a pause he added, "I'm much obliged to you for your offer, sir, but I know better than to sell myself to you or the like of you for a supper; and more than that, I know Father Horrigan has more regard for my soul than to wish me to pledge it for ever, out of regard to any thing you could put before him -- so there's an end of the matter."

The little speaker, with a pertinacity not to be repulsed by Dermod's manner, continued, "Will you ask the priest one civil question for us?"

Dermod considered for some time, and he was right in doing so, but he thought that no one could come to harm out of asking a civil question. "I see no objection to do that same, gentlemen," said Dermod; "but I will have nothing in life to do with your supper, -- mind that."

"Then," said the little speaking fairy, whilst the rest came crowding after him from all parts, "go and ask Father Horrigan to tell us whether our souls will be saved at the last day, like the souls of good Christians; and if you wish us well, bring back word what he says without delay."

Away went Dermod to his cabin, where he found the potatoes thrown out on the table, and his good woman handing the biggest of them all, a beautiful laughing red apple, smoking like a hard-ridden horse on a frosty night, over to Father Horrigan.

"Please your reverence," said Dermod, after some hesitation, "may I make bold to ask your honour one question?"

"What may that be?" said Father Horrigan.

"Why, then, begging your reverence's pardon for my freedom, it is, if the souls of the good people are to be saved at the last day?"

"Who bid you ask me that question, Leary?" said the priest, fixing his eyes upon him very sternly, which Dermod could not stand before at all.

"I'll tell no lies about the matter, and nothing in life but the truth," said Dermod. "It was the good people themselves who sent me to ask the question, and there they are in thousands down on the bank of the river waiting for me to go back with the answer."

"Go back by all means," said the priest, "and tell them, if they want to know, to come here to me themselves, and I'll answer that or any other question they are pleased to ask with the greatest pleasure in life."

Dermod accordingly returned to the fairies, who came swarming round about him to hear what the priest had said in reply; and Dermod spoke out among them like a bold man as he was: but when they heard that they must go to the priest, away they fled, some here and more there; and some this way and more that, whisking by poor Dermod so fast and in such numbers, that he was quite bewildered.

When he came to himself, which was not for a long time, back he went to his cabin and ate his dry potatoes along with Father Horrigan, who made quite light of the thing; but Dermod could not help thinking it a mighty hard case that his reverence, whose words had the power to banish the fairies at such a rate, should have no sort of relish to his supper, and that the fine salmon he had in the net should have been got away from him in such a manner.

- Source: Thomas Crofton Croker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (London: John Murray, 1834), pp. 22-27.
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The Belated Priest

Ireland

In one point of elvish mythology, Teuton and Celt are agreed, viz., that whether the supernatural beings of the old superstition be called fairies, elves, nixes, trolls, korigans, or duergars, they all live in fear of utter condemnation at the Day of Judgment. Their dislike of the human race arises from envy of their destiny, which they regard as the filling of the heavenly seats lost by themselves. Sometimes they experience a slight hope that their place may not be with Satan and his angels, and then they become urgent with holy and wise mortals, to give judgment on their case. This phase of fairy life will be illustrated by the local legend of --

THE BELATED PRIEST.

A very lonesome road connects the village of Ballindaggin, in the Duffrey, with the townland of Mangan, on the Bantry side of the brawling Urrin, and outside these intermediate stations it leads to Kaim and Castleboro, on one side, and the high road from Bunclody to Ross on the other. From the river to Ballindaggin, you hardly meet a house, and fallow fields extend on each side.

Father Stafford was asked, rather late in the day, to make a sick call at a cabin that stood among these fields, at a considerable distance from this road, a cabin from which no lane led either to by-road or public road. He was delayed longer than he expected, and when he was leaving the cabin it was nearly dark. This did not disturb him much. There was a path that led to the road, and he knew he had only to keep a northeasterly direction to come out on it, not far from the village already named. So he went on fearlessly for some time, but complete obscurity soon surrounded him, and he would have been sorely perplexed, had it not been that the path lay for the most part beside the fences.

At last, instead of passing in a line near the fence, it struck across the field; and, open his eyes wide as he might, he could hardly distinguish it from the dry, russet-colored grass at each side. Well, he kept his eyes steadily fixed in the due direction, and advanced till he was about the middle of the field, which happened to be a large one. There some case of conscience, or other anxious subject, crossed his mind, and he stopped and fidgeted about, walking restlessly this way and that for a few steps, totally forgetting his present circumstances. Coming at last to some solution of his difficulty, full recollection returned, and he was sensible of being thoroughly ignorant of the direction in which his proper route lay. If he could but get a glimpse of Mount Leinster, it would be all well; but, beyond a few perches, all was in the deepest darkness on every side. He then set off in a straight line, which he knew would bring him to some fence, and perhaps he might find stile or gap for his guidance. He went twice round the field, but, in the confusion of his faculties, he could find no trace of path or pass. He at last half resolved to cross the fence, and go straight on, but the dykes were, for the most part, encumbered with briers, and furze bushes crowned the tops of the steep clay mounds.

While he stood perplexed, he heard the rustle of wings or bodies passing swiftly through the air, and a musical voice was heard, "You will suffer much if you do not find your way. Give us a favorable answer to a question, and you shall be on the road in a few minutes."

The good priest was somewhat awed at the rustle and the voice, but he answered without delay, "Who are you, and what's your question?"

The same voice replied, "We are the Chlann Sighe, and wish you to declare that at the last day our lot may not be with Satan. Say that the Savior died for us as well as for you."

"I will give you a favorable answer, if you can make me a hopeful one. Do you adore and love the Son of God?"

He received no answer but weak and shrill cries, and the rushing of wings, and at once it seemed as if he had shaken off some oppression. The dark clouds had separated, a weak light was shed round where he stood, and he distinguished the path, and an opening in the bushes on the fence. He crossed into the next field, and, following the path, he was soon on the road. In fifteen minutes he was seated at his comfortable fire, and his little round table, covered with books, was at his side.

- Source: Patrick Kennedy, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* (London and New York: Macmillan and Company, 1891), pp. 87-89.
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The First Turf Fire

Ireland

So natural does it seem to see the turf burning on the cottage hearths, that it is difficult to conceive of a time when the people were ignorant of the use of it. Most things, however, have a beginning, and this is the story of the first turf fire according to Francis Whelan of Driny, who had it from an old resident in the place:

> Before the days of Saint Patrick, the only fuel the Irish had was wood, for the use of turf had not been discovered. One day St. Patrick's servant was returning home, when suddenly a little man in red appeared in front of him.
>
> "If you will ask St. Patrick the answer to one question," said he, "I will tell you something in return."
>
> "Well, what is it?" said the man.
>
> "Tomorrow morning at Mass ask him this question: 'Is there any hope for the fallen angels [fairies]?'"
>
> So the next morning at Mass, at the elevation, the servant called out he had a question he wished to ask (for the celebrant must answer any question put to him that moment).
>
> When Mass was over, St. Patrick said, "Who was that wretched man who called out?"
>
> The servant then told the saint about the little man and his question.
>
> Said St. Patrick: "You may just go and dig your own grave, for when you tell him the answer he will surely kill you, but don't forget to lay the loy and the shovel crosswise over the grave when you have done, for the answer to the little man's question is, 'There is no hope for the fallen angels.'"
>
> Then the man went and dug his grave, and he had just put the loy and shovel over him, when the little red man appeared and asked his question. When he heard the reply he tried to get at the poor servant to kill him, but as he was protected by the cross made by the loy and shovel, he could not touch him.
>
> At last he said: "Well, you have answered my question, and though it is against us, I must tell you something as I promised. Go to the bog and throw up some of the turf on it, and let it dry in the sun, and it will make a good fire for you" -- and he disappeared.
>
> The man got out of the grave then, and he told St. Patrick what the little red man had said, and when they tried they found every word true, and from that day the Irish have used turf for fuel.

- Source: Leland L. Duncan, "Further Notes from County Leitrim," *Folk-Lore: Transactions of the Folk-Lore Society*, vol. 5, no. 3 (September 1894), pp. 182-83.
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